
DOWNTOWN NOVATO DESIGN GUIDELINES



September 7, 2005



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I. INTRODUCTION

Downtown Novato is the social, commercial and historic heart of the community. The pattern of development and the variety of architectural styles of its building stock reflect Novato’s growth from the beginning of the 19th century to the present. Due to the character of growth and the changes in commercial and social activity throughout its history, the Downtown offers numerous opportunities for new development of underdeveloped and undeveloped properties. In recognition of the opportunities for advancing the commercial, social and historic uniqueness of Downtown Novato contained in the City’s General Plan the community adopted the Downtown Novato Specific Plan and the Downtown Novato Redevelopment Plan; two planning tools intended to facilitate public and private redevelopment throughout the Downtown.

In addition to the general redevelopment guidance provided in the Downtown Novato Specific Plan and the Downtown Novato Redevelopment Plan, design guidelines are an important reference tool to insure that each new construction project is of the highest quality and provides a positive contribution to the Downtown’s built environment.

These Design Guidelines are intended to guide site and architecture design for new buildings, additions and renovations of existing buildings to optimize the look and function of each building and its aesthetic and functional contribution to the greater Downtown area. The day to day application of these Guidelines is intended to clarify the City’s design objectives and expectations for development and redevelopment within the Downtown. To this end, these



Guidelines are intended to be utilized by project sponsors, the public, City staff, and the decision making authority when considering the merits of a project’s design. By following applicable criteria contained within these Design Guidelines a project’s proponent(s) can anticipate expedited Design Review and approval.

Through careful use of text and graphics, these Design Guidelines are intended to promote a distinctive and cohesive application of high quality design principles and materials applicable to site design, building architecture, and landscaping. Further, these Design Guidelines include design direction for the renovation of and/or the addition to existing structures including structures identified for their historic significance. Lastly, woven throughout these Design Guidelines are design principles and examples that convey a commitment to maximizing the “pedestrian experience” throughout Downtown Novato. Please carefully consider these Guidelines while planning your next project in Downtown Novato.

General Design Objectives

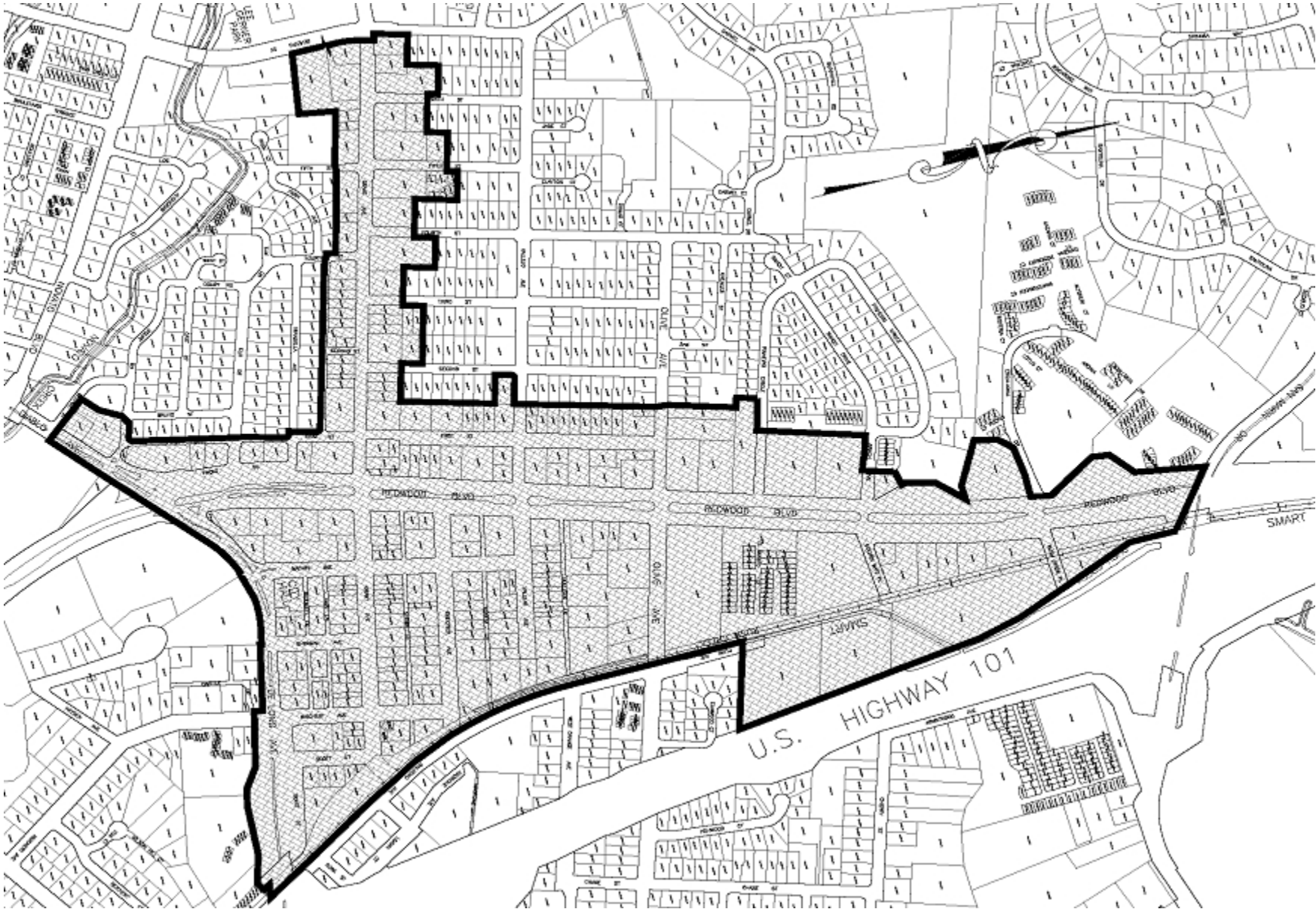
1. Provide the business and/or development community with a clear and comprehensive set of architectural design criteria applicable to the Downtown.
2. Create a very attractive and vibrant downtown through the physical design of structures and space, and maximum pedestrian access to and use of commercial uses and public spaces.
3. Facilitate pedestrian friendly spaces through appropriate site and architectural design



- including measures to mitigate negative impacts associated with automobile circulation, loading/unloading and parking.
- 4. Preserve and invigorate structures that are distinctive due to their age, historical or cultural importance or architectural character.
 - 5. Ensure that all new buildings, additions and renovations incorporate outstanding architectural design and detailing that includes high quality finish materials.



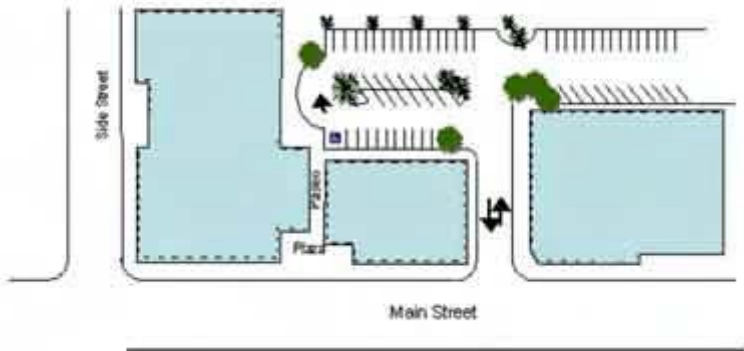
Exhibit 1 - Design Guidelines Applicable Planning Area



II. SITE DESIGN GUIDELINES

- A. Pedestrian Experience: Site designs should coordinate with surrounding conditions, while maximizing the pedestrian experience through the arrangement of structures, and well integrated pedestrian and vehicle circulation systems.

- B. Street Frontage: Siting of buildings at the street frontages is strongly encouraged. Building designs that achieve no setback or minimal building setback from the street should be pursued.



- C. Continuity of Streetscape/Parking behind buildings: The continuity of pedestrian oriented facilities and space along street frontages shall be maintained. Avoid and, where feasible, eliminate parking lots fronting the street(s).

Organize parking at the rear of buildings to maintain the continuity of pedestrian spaces and uses along the street.

D. Pedestrian Serving Spaces: Building elevations and features that serve pedestrians including storefronts and entries should be oriented towards streets and accompanying pedestrian areas such as courtyards, plazas and paseos. Blank walls, loading doors, trash enclosures, storage areas, utility vaults and other inactive or unattractive uses should be avoided in these same areas.

E. Use of Plazas, Courtyards and Paseos:

1. Where the intent is to provide active outdoor area, courtyards, plazas and paseos can be considered provided they maintain a strong sense of continuity with the overall pedestrian activity along the affected streetscape.
2. Plazas, courtyards and paseos may be incorporated where they facilitate appropriate building massing and/or improve access to the sides and rear of buildings. Additionally, paseos may be incorporated to facilitate improved pedestrian access to parking lots located behind buildings.



- 3. Plazas and courtyards should incorporate ample seating opportunities. When proposed, raised planters and fountains should incorporate seating.
- 4. Paseos provide common side and/or rear access between buildings, and should incorporate adequate design detailing (doors and/or windows , and accompanying trim, tile mosaics, wall fountains, etc.) that make them inviting for pedestrians.
- 5. Landscaping, art, decorative lighting and/or fixtures, decorative paving, and ample seating should be incorporated wherever appropriate within plazas, courtyards and paseos.



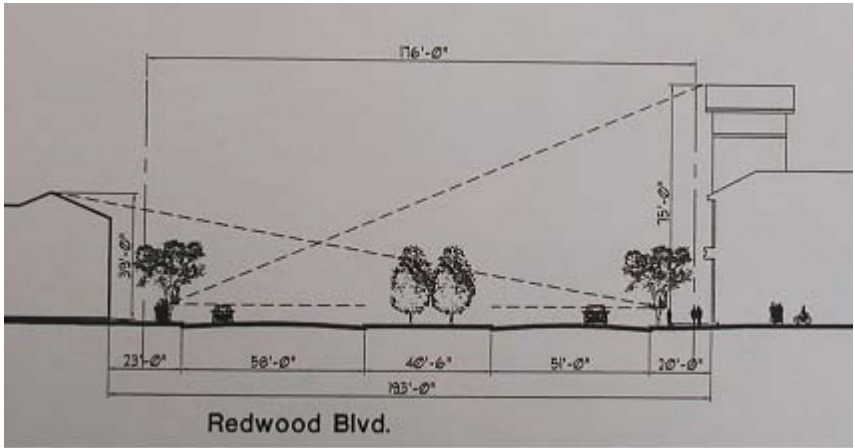
III. ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES

A. New Construction

- 1. Building Mass and Form: The mass and form of new buildings shall employ the following design principals:
 - a. The mass and form of new buildings shall provide a coordinated and unassuming transition with adjacent and/or surrounding buildings.
 - b. The wider a building is, the taller it may be. Tall narrow buildings are discouraged.



- c. The mass and form of new buildings and additions should be proportional to the street width i.e. the wider the street, the greater the opportunity is to increase the mass, including height, of a building(s).



wider streets expand opportunities to increase building mass and height

- d. For large in-fill projects that comprise a significant portion of a block, the building facade(s) should be visually divided into two or more individual storefronts, e.g., 25' storefront modules.
- e. Well defined building edges at adjacent buildings shall be incorporated to clearly distinguish each building's individual storefront, including upper floors.



- 2. Proportion and Scale: To provide proportion and scale in new buildings, draw upon the following design principals:
 - a. The proportions and scale of existing adjacent and/or surrounding buildings shall be respected in the design of new buildings.



- b. To maintain a less imposing appearance, taller buildings should include horizontal design elements (clerestory, transoms, trim band between floors, balconies etc). For two+ story buildings, a well composed tablature or clerestory is a fundamental way to "cap" the first floor.
- c. Where a more massive/taller building(s) is proposed, it may be accommodated through the use of gradated and/or regressive upper levels or stories at the front, sides and/or rear.

clerestory
"caps" 1st floor
→



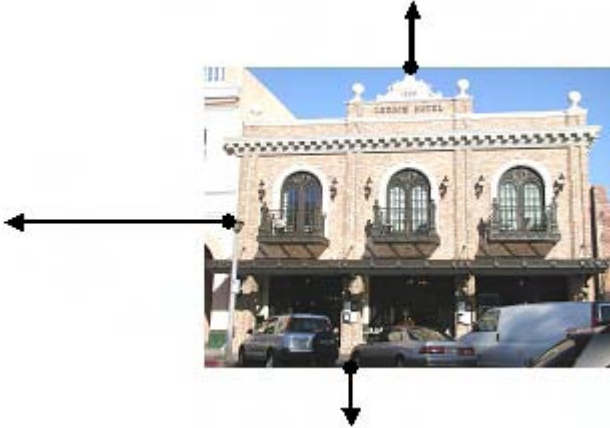
- d. The visual scale of a building is reduced and its proportions are enhanced through a careful and balanced arrangement of building components or modules both at the ground floor and upper levels; said modules shall be adequately articulated to distinguish them from the larger structure.



←
↑
arrangement of 2nd story windows distinguishes it from 1st floor retail uses

- e. Architectural detailing at every level of a building's facade is an important technique to diminish a building's apparent overall size and mass. Often, it is the added detailing at the upper limits of a building's facade that most effectively reduce it's overall visual scale.

- f. The proportions and scale of a building's facade(s) should visually enhance the pedestrian experience. This can be achieved by applying an appropriate degree of design detailing and finish at every level (one or more stories) of a building, including the cornice or roof.



3. Rhythm of Facade(s): The following design techniques shall be considered to establish a rhythm to the facade of individual and/or adjacent buildings/storefronts:
- a. Attractive repeating forms in the facade create a visually interesting rhythm that serves to break up the scale of a building(s).
 - b. Elements of comparative scale (width, height, massing) serve to visually link a network of buildings for the pedestrian while preserving the opportunity to apply creative detailing to distinguish individual storefronts.
 - c. Rhythm of the design can be accomplished by repeating major building modules in distinguishable segments at the first floor. For two+ story buildings, the major rhythm generated by the building modules established at the first floor should be balanced or complemented in the upper stories through thoughtful composition of vertical and horizontal design elements (windows, french doors, balconies, cornices and/or roofs etc).
 - d. Each storefront can introduce a customized sub-rhythm through the composition of details (doors, windows,



rhythm of ground floor modules is complemented through the balance and design of 2nd story elements (french doors & balconies, decorated frieze, roof etc).

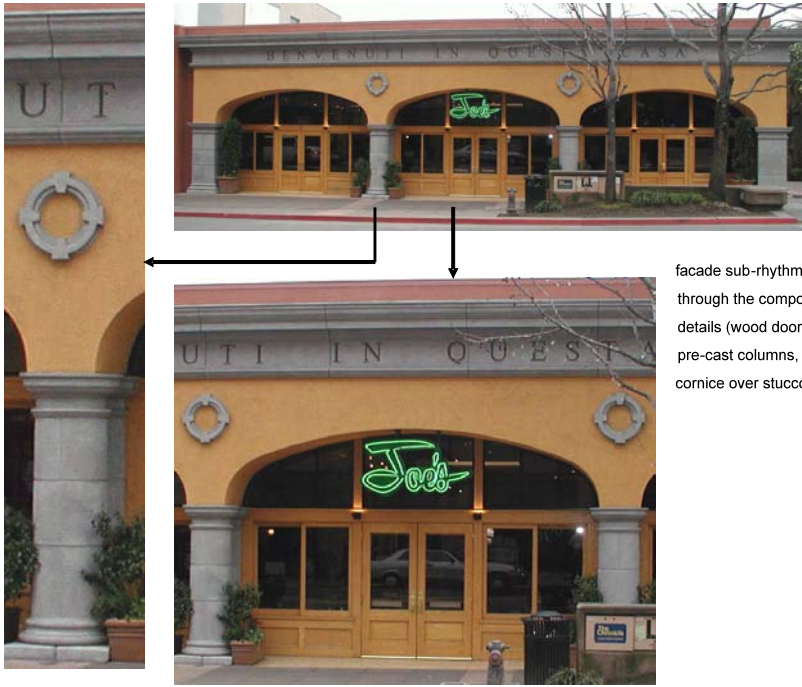
transom windows, decorative friezes, canopies or awnings, balconies etc) as well as the materials used in their construction (stucco, stone, tile, wood, metal, glass, etc).

- 4. **Architectural Style:** A range of architectural styles are acceptable in the Downtown. However, new buildings or individual storefronts shall employ, consistently, from ground level to roof, one style of architecture for all visible elevations (front, side, rear). Examples of acceptable architectural styles include Gothic Revival(s), Queen Anne, Mission, Streamline Modern, Italianate, Spanish Colonial Revival, etc. An eclectic mix of architectural styles (two or more) within a building or storefront facade is not appropriate.

Please note that new buildings, building renovations and building additions within the Downtown Historic Overlay District shall comply with the provisions of the Novato Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 19 of the Novato Municipal Code.

- 5. **Visual Interest:** Building facades, particularly facades that face public spaces, shall include high quality design elements that provide visual interest from the ground level to the roof or cornice.

- 6. **Visibility:** The first floor of buildings/storefronts shall be designed with a predominance of open and/or transparent surfaces to facilitate pedestrian encounters with



facade sub-rhythm enhanced through the composition of details (wood doors/windows, pre-cast columns, frieze and cornice over stucco body).

high quality design and trim elements visible from the ground to cornice



retail merchandise and other store activities. Additionally, outdoor plazas and dining areas should be designed with visibility from surrounding pedestrian walkways.

7. **Storefronts:** Attractive and functional storefronts should be provided by addressing key design principals, including:

- a. Storefront display windows should be large and of clear transparent glass.
- b. Storefronts should be designed in a repeating rhythm along the sidewalk to facilitate pedestrian movement and interaction.
- c. Building facades with three or more storefronts may vary base materials, entry locations or awning/canopy design.
- d. Operable display windows are encouraged when feasible.

8. **Entrances:** Entries should be visually emphasized by applying additional design principals and features, including, but not limited to:

- a. Entries should be recessed from the facade.
- b. Entries should be accentuated by framing them with projecting decorative piers or columns.



open-air storefront for dining with recessed/transparent entry



storefronts in a repeated rhythm cater to pedestrian movement

e.g., fluted support columns or trim, detailed pediment, etc. of wood, tile, brick, stone etc.

- c. Awnings or canopies should be considered over entries.

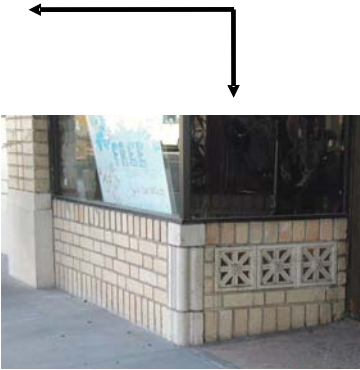
9. **Building Base:** The base of buildings should address the following design considerations:

- a. The base should serve to raise the interior display area up to view and protect the building and display windows from damage.
- b. A building's base shall be made of an attractive and durable material(s), including but not limited to dimensioned stone, brick, marble, granite, ceramic tile and wood. The selected base material(s) shall complement materials used in the upper facade.
- c. If the base and facade are composed of matching materials, the base can be distinguished by changing the pattern/orientation of the materials, e.g., stone, brick, tile, or adding other accents.
- d. For a base proposed of wood, smooth-finished, recessed panels are an appropriate solution.
- e. Where vents are needed at the base, they shall be of a decorative material and design (ceramic, iron, brass).

entry is accentuated with a stainless steel column, canopy and transom



bases of durable, decorative tile and brick with decorative tile vents



10. Roofs and Upper Story Details

a. Cornices should be appropriately decorated to cap the building, complement its scale, and contribute to the visual interest of the streetscape and skyline. For multiple story facades, horizontal moldings should be used between floors to differentiate the storefront from the upper floors.



decorative roof designs and finish elements at a building's upper limits serve to maintain its scale and provide visual interest.

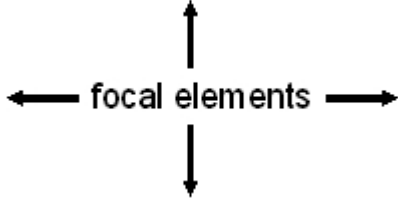


b. The eaves of gable and/or hipped roofs should be decorated with brackets, trim, and/or molding.

c. Decorative accent elements that are consistent with the architectural style of a building should be applied to complement the building's scale and add interest to the facade. Typical elements include ornamental medallions, grills, iron brackets and rods, lights, flags, scuppers, leader heads with appropriately finished downspouts etc.



11. Focal elements: Architectural features like projecting roof parapets, bell/clock towers, copulas, elaborated chimney tops, spires, etc., can enhance a building’s visual interest, and serve as reference points for pedestrians. These types of elements should be considered on a building-by-building basis.



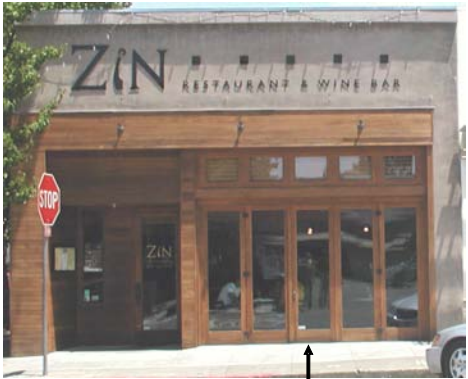
12. Franchise or Corporate Motifs: Franchise or corporate style architecture, including signature building designs, sign designs and highly contrasting color schemes are strongly discouraged.

13. Windows:

- a. Glazing at storefront display areas should be maximized as appropriate to showcase merchandise.
- b. Typical residential divided-light windows are not recommend for use at storefronts.
- c. Where divided light windows are desired, 'true divided light' windows are required, or if simulated dividers are used they must be on both sides of the glass.
- d. Clear glazing shall be used at the storefront: reflective glazing is not acceptable. Stained glass panels may be used as accents or at transoms. Tinted glazing is not recommended at the street level.
- e. Operable windows are encouraged where possible, including ground floor locations where food will be served.
- f. The design of windows above the ground floor should provide adequate enhancement features, including but not limited to:
 - tile borders
 - colored framing
 - deep wall recesses
 - projecting/bay window
 - pedimented and/or decorative trim and sills
 - shutters
 - iron grills
 - dormers



maximum glazing for retail display



operable wood windows enhance look and function of space



true divided lights throughout storefront
examples of window enhancements



14. Awnings and Canopies: When proposed, awnings and canopies should address the following design and functional considerations:

- a. Awnings and canopies should be designed to enhance pedestrian interface with respective storefront windows and entries, including providing shade and protection from rain.
- b. The size and shape of awnings and canopies should complement the architectural composition of a facade, including its scale, proportions and rhythm e.g. storefront bays, entry(s) and building edges.
- c. Awnings and canopies should not dominate or overwhelm the facade.
- d. Awnings and canopies should be set back from a building's edges.
- e. For wide buildings, one continuous awning that extends across the entire facade should be avoided. Separate, but matching awnings should be applied that serve to distinguish the bays and entry(s) that comprise a wide facade.
- f. Awnings and canopies applied on upper stories should be limited to the areas above doors and windows.
- g. The materials and colors used in the construction of awnings or canopies (fabric, metal, glass etc) should be durable and complement the building's finish. Glossy and plastic awnings are strongly discouraged.



awnings and canopies that provide cover and compliment the architectural composition of the storefront



Individual, matching awnings serve to distinguish bay windows and entry



- h. Adequate detailing, including the appearance of the underside, of awnings and canopies shall be addressed through their design.
- i. Awnings and canopies should serve to further complement a building’s design, and not be introduced as a substitute for good architecture.

15. Stairways:

- a. Stairway entries proposed within ground floor storefronts shall be arranged to complement the architectural rhythm and sub-rhythm of the facade.
- b. If visible, stairway designs should incorporate materials consistent with the building's architectural style, e.g., tile risers, stone treads, iron hand rails etc.
- c. Exposed stringer stairways are discouraged. However, if proposed, the stringers and, corresponding support columns shall be completely wrapped and trimmed with materials consistent with the building’s finish. Exposed railing shall be appropriately detailed (decorative balustrade, newel etc.); for durability, use of decorative metal is encouraged.

canopy and awning that provide adequate detailing



stairway adjacent to paseo is appropriately enclosed and trimmed with material (brick) consistent with the building

16. Balconies and Rooftop Use Areas:

- a. Balconies and rooftop use areas are encouraged provided their location, proportions, and detailing complement the building architecture.
- b. Exposed railing shall be appropriately detailed; for durability, use of decorative metal is encouraged.



↑ well proportioned and detailed balconies ↑

17. Building Materials: Exterior building materials should coincide with the architectural style of the structure. Use of the following materials is encouraged for the exterior finish of buildings within the Downtown:

- brick
- smooth wood
- stone
- marble
- granite
- stucco (smooth or hand textured)

Complimentary but contrasting materials should be used to highlight building design elements, trim and details. Accent materials include, but are not limited to:

- brick
- concrete and plaster
- stone
- wood
- glass/glass block



complementary but contrasting materials (stone, stucco and smooth wood trim) provide a distinctive, attractive finish to a façade

- tile
- forged metal/wrought iron
- copper
- painted metal
- metal and fabric awnings
- metal and glass canopies

18. Colors: In addition to the inherent colors of unpainted finish materials, the following paint color considerations are recommended for buildings in the Downtown:

- a. The color scheme should complement a building's architectural style.
- b. The color value of any unpainted finish materials (stone, brick etc.) and details (tile, metal, colored glass etc.) should be factored in with the selection of paint colors.
- c. Where appropriate, paint schemes should incorporate a base color, a wall color, a trim color that is a shade lighter or darker than the wall color, and an accent color(s) for architectural details.
- d. Trim colors can either be lighter or shades darker than the wall color.
- e. Accent colors for architectural details may be brighter or a contrasting color to the wall color.

19. Walls and Fences Wall and fence enclosures should be designed as an integral component of the overall building concept including scale,



accent elements made of tile, forged metal, glass, and canvas provide a rich contrast to the finish materials of a building that serve to expand upon an architectural style

an appropriate color scheme provides a complementary base color, wall color, trim color, and an accent color for architectural details



materials, decorative elements (e.g. ornamental metal, inset tile, planters etc.) and color.



wall articulated with posts and metal railing

20. Ancillary Building Components

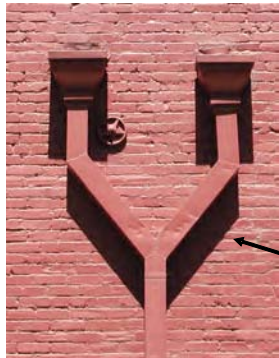
Design techniques should be employed to conceal utility lines, meters, security devices, vents and other functional components from view. However, functional components that cannot be feasibly concealed should be integrated into the building design to add visual richness. Functional components offered in decorative styles include, but are not limited to:

- roof scuppers, catches and down spouts
- metal grilles at vent openings
- security devices and lighting
- fire sprinkler standpipe and hose bib enclosures
- address/plaques

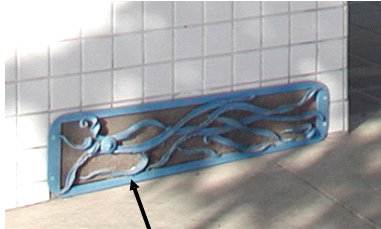
Mechanical Equipment: mechanical systems, including roof mounted systems, are to be screened from view, preferably by architecturally consistent screen walls or parapet wall(s), and/or by location.



where visible, trash enclosures should be designed and finished in material(s) consistent with adjacent buildings, and incorporate landscape screening where feasible



decorative brass plaque



decorative scuppers/downspouts, vent grill and driveway bollards

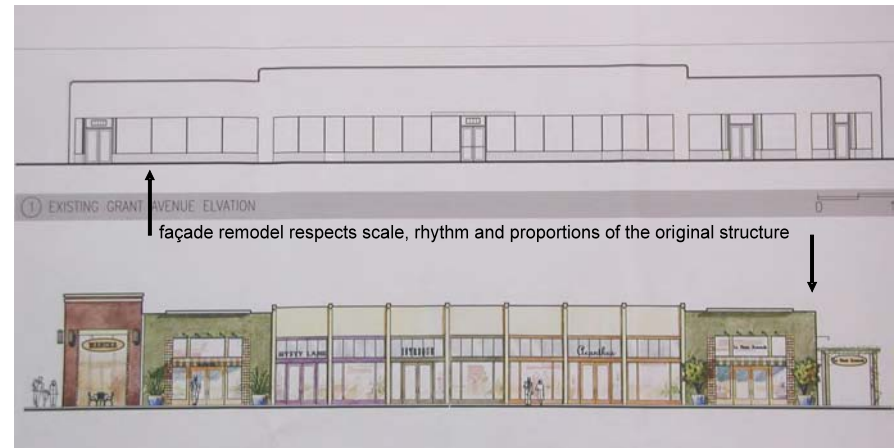


B. Building Renovations and Additions

1. Preserve Original Features and Decoration: The value of preserving existing design elements including, building proportions, finish materials, trim, doors, windows, and fixtures should be considered when undertaking building renovations and/or additions.
2. Removal of Elements Inconsistent with Original Facade: If a building’s original design elements are determined to be of historic and/or architectural significance, subsequently applied features that are incompatible should be removed.
3. Storefront Renovation: When it is determined that a building facade is historically significant due to its contribution to the Downtown’s architectural heritage any alteration shall retain or incorporate the essential elements and details of the original facade. Contemporary interpretations and replications of original building elements (windows, plaster trim work, wood, details, etc.) may be considered provided they offer an equivalent visual quality and improved durability.
4. Additions to Existing Structures: Addition(s) should be consistent with the scale, proportions, and massing of the original structure. Additionally, exterior finish materials and details should be consistent with the existing building.



three remodeled storefronts due to fire retain composition and detailing of the original storefront



5. Awnings, Doors, Windows: For buildings determined to be of historical significance, the design of replacement awnings, doors and windows should be compatible with the historical character and design of the building.

IV. LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES

- A. Purpose of Landscaping: The type and arrangement of landscaping should serve to soften hard scape elements while preserving functional areas for pedestrian gatherings.



replacement awning respects building edge, and limits of transom above

landscaping type/arrangement softens hardscape and preserves space for pedestrian gatherings



B. Plant Selection: Use of climbing vines, flowering plants, arbors, trellises and container planting is encouraged. Tree selection should include careful consideration of their characteristics (large, small, evergreen, deciduous, leaf and litter, shape, etc.) in conjunction with the setting and intended use of surrounding space.

C. Container Plants: Container plants in decorative, durable, and functional planters (e.g., provide seating, separation of seating areas and pedestrian walkways, etc.) should be incorporated to enhance the street frontage, courtyards, and plazas.

D. Irrigation and Drainage: Planter areas should incorporate permanent drainage and automatic irrigation systems.

E. Tree Planting Measures: All trees in paved areas should be provided with deep root barriers, automatic irrigation and City Standard metal grates. Trees lining walkways and within plazas and courtyards should include metal grates to facilitate foot traffic.

F. Lighting: Freestanding lighting for plazas, courtyards, parking areas and paseos should complement light fixtures applied to the corresponding building(s).



use of climbing vines with a trellis provides a lush backdrop for a paseo and outdoor seating



attractive containers/plants enhance the appearance of courtyards and sidewalk seating



plaza lighting consistent with other building fixtures



tree grate facilitates foot traffic

V. SIGNS

A. General Sign Design Criteria:

- 1. Signs shall conform with the rhythm, scale and proportions of the facade, including signs applied to awnings and canopies.
- 2. Sign placement should avoid blocking or extending over architectural elements of a facade, including over and/or above roof eaves and cornices/edges.
- 3. Electrical supply equipment e.g. conduit, junction boxes etc. shall not be visible.
- 4. Signs shall comply with applicable requirements contained in the Novato Zoning Code, Division 19.32.

B. Wall Signs:

- 1. Wall signs shall be centered above the storefront, and within recessed or framed areas, if any.
- 2. Interior illuminated channel lettering and sign boxes with illuminated backgrounds are strongly discouraged.
- 3. Decorative (goose neck) spot lighting or back lighting (halo illumination) of individual letters is appropriate.
- 4. Spot lighting fixtures should eliminate or shield against “off-sign” glare.
- 5. Use of individual letters (“pin mounted” or other) is encouraged.
- 6. In building facades that include multiple storefronts, consistent, lasting materials, including materials for mounting and lighting, consistent letter size, and consistent locations (vertically and horizontally, where feasible) should be used.



signs that respect the rhythm, scale and proportions of the architecture



attractive spot lighting



appropriately centered wall signs within recessed and framed areas, where applicable



C. Projecting (Blade) Signs:

1. Blade signs with minimal text that principally display the business’s logo, or a graphic that depicts the business’s product line(s) and/or service(s) are encouraged. Three-dimensional graphics are appropriate.
2. Both a decorative sign and appropriately detailed supporting bracket(s) shall be utilized.
3. Signs constructed of painted or unpainted wood and/or metal are encouraged. Use of dimensioned metal, forged metal or wrought iron for support brackets is encouraged.
4. If sign lighting is desired, spot lighting verses interior illumination is strongly recommended.

textured, painted wood



forged metal brackets



uniform format draws pedestrian attention



blade signs with logo and minimal text



D. Window Signs:

1. Signs should only consist of letters or graphics applied directly to the glass.
2. To the extent feasible, signs should avoid the obstructing of pedestrian views into a storefront.
3. Use of brilliant colors should be avoided or strictly limited.
4. Neon signs are discouraged.

window signs that maintain views into the storefront



E. Canopy and Overhang Signs:

- 1. Use of individual lettering mounted on top of a canopy(s) is appropriate; sign boxes in this location are discouraged.
- 2. Individual letters applied to the face of a canopy(s) are appropriate. Signs should be centered within trim detailing (recessed panels etc) of a canopy's face, if any.
- 3. Both a decorative sign(s) and appropriately detailed suspension system(s) shall be utilized for suspended signs.
- 4. Suspended signs constructed of painted or unpainted wood and/or metal are encouraged. Use of a metal suspension systems e.g., decorative chain and/or decorative metal rods is encouraged; wire and rope are discouraged.



good use of top mounted lettering and face mounted, individual lettering on canopies



suspended sign of painted wood



painted wood overhanging signs



decorative metal overhanging sign

F. Awning Signs:

- 1. Sign copy should be centered on an awning(s) and limited in size e.g. not more than 10% of the sloping face of an awning.
- 2. Only logos or symbols depicting the nature of the business should be applied to the sloped face of awnings. Any additional sign text should be applied to an awning's valance.
- 3. Indirect, spot lighting (gooseneck or other decorative fixtures), of ground floor awnings is appropriate; internal illumination of awning signs is discouraged.
- 4. Signs applied to awnings above the ground floor (awnings over 2nd story windows etc.) are discouraged.

G. Freestanding Signs: Freestanding and/or monument signs are discouraged.



VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Novato City Council
Bernie Meyers
Carole Dillon-Knutson
Judy Arnold
Pat Eklund
Jeanne MacLeamy

Design Review Committee
Patrick MacLeamy
Beth Swenson Radovanovich
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